DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 593 CE 085 618

AUTHOR	Macleod, Dierdre; Taylor, Sue, Ed.
TITLE	Learning and Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Policy Review.
INSTITUTION	Learning and Skills Development Agency, London (England).
ISBN	ISBN-1-85338-923-4
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	27p.; Supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. For related reports, see CE 085 397 and CE 085 617.
AVAILABLE FROM	Learning and Skills Development Agency, Regent Arcade House, 19-25 Argyll Street, London W1F 7LS, United Kingdom (Ref. No. 1523). Tel: 020 7297 9000; Fax: 020 7297 9001; Web site: http://www.lsda.org.uk/home.asp. For full text: http://www.lsda.org.uk/files/pdf/1523.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; Adult Learning; Community Development; Community Education; Economic Development; Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; Institutional Mission; *Neighborhood Improvement; *Partnerships in Education; Postsecondary Education; *Poverty Areas; *Professional Personnel; Public Policy; School Community Relationship; *Skill Development; Social Change; *Social Services; Staff Development; Urban Areas
IDENTIFIERS	Best Practices; *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

A policy review examined the extent to which changes to the post-16 learning and skills policy environment, particularly in relation to further education (FE) colleges, were likely to support neighborhood renewal-related knowledge and skills development. It focused particularly on the development of skills and knowledge needed by regeneration practitioners and public sector professionals working in the most deprived neighborhoods, as well as residents who wish to become involved in regeneration activities. The policy framework for post-16 learning and skills introduced in 2001 has the potential to be very helpful to the development of learning and skills for neighborhood renewal. However, because it is but one of many issues within the Learning and Skill Council's (LSC) span of control, key stakeholders in the sector may not yet be fully aware of its importance and their potential role in delivering it. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) should examine the following policy "levers" to help ensure that adequate regard is given to neighborhood renewal within the learning and skills sector: (1) learning and skills targets; (2) strategic planning of learning provision; (3) funding policies; (4) quality improvement staff development; and (5) strategic organization and development policies. (Contains endnotes.) (MO)

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ED 481 593

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

learning and skills development agency

Learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal

A policy review

by Deirdre Macleod
edited by Sue Taylor

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This report was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) as part of a study by the Agency for the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU). It includes policy advice addressed to the NRU. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NRU.

Published by the
Learning and Skills Development Agency

www.LSDA.org.uk

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Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Printed in the UK

1523/08/03/3000

ISBN 1 85338 923 4

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Summary of conclusions and key issues

The changes in policy brought about as a result of the introduction of a new framework for post-16 learning and skills have the potential to be very helpful to the development of learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal. The framework has been designed to enable 'cross-cutting' issues to be addressed. The Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) Remit and Grant Letters include specific references to regeneration activity.

Partnership working is regarded as essential to the achievement of many of the post-16 policy goals and is key to the operation of the LSC and the Regional Development Agencies' (RDAs') work on Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESAs).

There are some early indications that the LSC's planning and funding processes are likely to be supportive of regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. For example, the LSC's Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID) has been used to address specific learning and skills issues in different ways in each area.[1] The LID and FE Learner Support Funds have also been 'bent' towards the most disadvantaged local areas.

Moreover, changes to the infrastructure created to advise and inform the LSC about learning priorities and needs will help sharpen the focus upon regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. Local learning partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships both have a key role in contributing to regeneration strategies and are also regarded as key partner organisations that the LSC should consult as it draws up local learning priorities.

However, the LSC's span of control is very broad. It is responsible for the planning and funding and quality improvement of all post-16 learning provision. It is expected to meet wide-ranging, high-level targets on the participation, attainment and skills acquisition of young people and adults and it is expected to make rapid progress on a large number of fronts, from workforce development and progression into higher education to improving adult basic skills. As such, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal is but one of many issues which the LSC must tackle.

The identification of skills and learning for neighbourhood renewal as a specific skill set and the recognition of the importance of these skills for those who work in neighbourhood renewal is a relatively new phenomenon. As such, policy-makers and key stakeholders, including those responsible within LSCs and RDAs for preparing skills and learning strategies, may only be becoming aware of the need for such skills to be considered as part of wider skills and employment strategies. Until there is better recognition of the importance of these skills, neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge may receive less attention, and be considered low priority for funding compared to other vocational skills.

As the post-16 learning and skills policy framework has been introduced recently, and as the LSC is still a relatively new organisation, many policies and programmes have yet to be fully implemented. As a result, in many areas there is still little empirical evidence available on the actual impact of the post-16 reforms. Even where policies have been implemented and programmes of activity have started, the LSC and the post-16 learning and skills policy framework have only been in operation for just over one year. This is a short time period over which to judge actions and priorities.

The relative immaturity of the post-16 strategic planning, funding and quality policies brings some advantages. Given that a number of policies and processes are still developing, such as local strategic planning processes, area reviews and professional teaching qualifications, there may well be scope to influence the content and operation of these policies, to ensure that they give adequate regard to neighbourhood renewal-related learning and skills development.

The capacity of FE colleges to contribute to neighbourhood renewal is also likely to be improved by the post-16 policy framework's focus on local planning and provider collaboration and by more specific policy proposals for the FE sector. Policies of college specialisation, improved focus on local needs and the professionalisation of college teaching staff are likely to lead to a better informed and higher quality response to neighbourhood renewal learning and skills needs where these needs exist.

However, it cannot be assumed that all colleges will be equipped to, or will wish to, deliver learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal. Decisions on mission and focus by colleges will be influenced by a range of operational and environmental factors, including competing policy priorities and levels of local competition for learners.

Ministerial steers in relation to post-16 learning and regeneration suggest that it is adult and community learning (ACL) providers who are expected to take a leading role in neighbourhood renewal. ACL providers undoubtedly have an important role to play, particularly in encouraging people with limited prior experience of learning to gain skills that help them participate in neighbourhood renewal activities.

FE colleges could also have a role to play in delivering programmes of training for regeneration practitioners and public sector professionals. As more collaborative approaches to planning and delivering learning emerge, it is possible that local provider networks might offer an effective solution to delivering a range of learning programmes within a local area. This might involve community and voluntary sector providers working with colleges to deliver different types of learning and skills development to different groups of individuals involved in neighbourhood renewal, according to the particular focuses and strengths of the providers.

The report suggests a number of policy 'levers' that the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) might wish to examine, to help ensure that adequate regard is given to neighbourhood renewal within the learning and skills sector. The key levers relate to:

- learning and skills targets
- strategic planning of learning provision
- funding policies
- quality improvement – staff development
- strategic organisation and development policies.

Introduction

1 This policy review examines the extent to which recent changes to the post-16 learning and skills policy environment, particularly in relation to further education (FE) colleges, are likely to support neighbourhood renewal-related knowledge and skills development. The review was prepared by Deirdre Macleod of Critical Thinking (now Policyworks) and it was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) as part of a study conducted by the Agency for the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), on the potential contribution of FE colleges to neighbourhood renewal. It was completed in November 2002. (Endnotes have been added to reflect some further developments known at the date of publication.)

Scope of the review

2 In line with the project specification, the policy review examines the impact of changes to post-16 policy upon the capacity of FE colleges and other adult and community learning (ACL) providers to contribute to neighbourhood renewal-related skills and knowledge development.

3 The review focuses on examining the extent to which post-16 learning and skills policies support the NRU's Learning and Development Strategy, rather than on more general issues associated with neighbourhood renewal, for which the NRU is also responsible. That is, the review focuses particularly on the development of skills and knowledge needed by regeneration practitioners and public sector professionals working in the most deprived neighbourhoods, as well as residents who wish to become involved in regeneration activities. However, it should be recognised that many FE colleges and other adult learning providers have an important role in delivering learning programmes more generally for people living in the 88 neighbourhood renewal areas.

Background to the NRU's Learning and Development Strategy

4 The government made commitments in its 'National strategy action plan for neighbourhood renewal' (commitments 99 and 100) to promote a step-change in the level of skills and knowledge of everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal.[2] It promised to develop a strategy for learning and development to make sure that there was a focus on improving the regeneration-related skills and knowledge of all of those involved in implementing regeneration strategies.

5 The National Strategy Action Plan highlighted a number of key challenges relating to learning and skills development, including:

- the need to identify gaps and weaknesses in current learning provision and, where necessary, to commission practical training packages
- how best to fund learning and development for those with limited financial means
- how best to make changes to occupational standards in order to equip public sector professionals (eg teachers, doctors, public servants) with the skills they need to play a more effective part in neighbourhood renewal
- whether joint learning might be appropriate and how to promote it.

6 The NRU's Learning and Development Strategy, entitled *The learning curve: developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal*, emerged from these commitments.[3] *The learning curve* argues that:

> *If we are serious about improving deprived neighbourhoods, we must invest a lot more in developing the skills and knowledge of those involved in neighbourhood renewal.*

7 It raised a number of other, related issues, including:

- how to impart neighbourhood renewal skills to regeneration practitioners and other professionals who do not work primarily on regeneration activities, but who, nevertheless, have a key contribution to make to regeneration, such as public sector professionals, public and civil servants and other policy-makers
- how to make sure that residents have the skills that they need, including community engagement, project management and partnership working
- how to create new ways of working including new ways of delivery
- how to encourage organisations, not just individuals, to learn
- how to develop specific standards for neighbourhood renewal.

Structure of the policy analysis

8 This review is in two parts. **Part A** examines post-16 policy development and change at strategic level, including:

- the duties, roles and responsibilities of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) that might support, or detract from, neighbourhood renewal-related skills and knowledge development
- other relevant policy developments, such as the creation of Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESAs) and Neighbourhood Learning Centres
- the emergence of specific policies for the FE sector.

9 **Part B** examines in more detail the post-16 strategic planning, funding, quality improvement and strategic organisation and development policies that have been and, in some cases (at the time of writing), have yet to be implemented by the LSC and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It identifies potentially useful policy 'tools' and suggests ways in which the NRU might influence the development or implementation of these tools to help achieve its objectives for neighbourhood renewal-related skills and knowledge development.

Part A

Overview of the post-16 learning and skills policy framework

10 The new framework and structural arrangements for post-16 learning and skills were set out in *Learning to succeed*, the government's White Paper on a new framework for post-16 learning.[4] The changes described in the White Paper were enacted in the Learning and Skills Act (2000) and took effect from April 2001.

11 The policy framework described in *Learning to succeed* is designed to ensure that learning provision is driven by, and is responsive to, the needs of individuals, businesses and their communities, resulting in better access to education, training and skills opportunities.

12 The learning and development issues raised in *The national strategy action plan for neighbourhood renewal* and *The learning curve* mirror closely the objectives of the post-16 learning and skills reforms. For example, the need to identify gaps and weaknesses in current training provision, the need to fund learning for those with limited means (identified in *The national strategy action plan*) and the desire to encourage organisations and individuals to learn (identified in *The learning curve*) are very similar in tone and substance to the aims described in *Learning to succeed*.

Key duties and responsibilities of the LSC

13 The LSC was established as the main planning and funding body for post-16 learning and skills provision and, as such, it is the conduit for much of the policy development that affects FE colleges. Its key responsibilities, as set out in the Annex to the Secretary of State's Remit Letter, are:[5]

- identifying national and local learning and skills needs
- setting and implementing strategies to meet those needs
- driving up demand for learning and skills from individuals and employers
- advising government on the post-16 National Learning Targets
- securing progress towards those targets and planning, funding and securing higher standards in post-16 providers.

14 However, there are other important aspects of the post-16 learning and skills policy which are the responsibility of other bodies, although the LSC is expected to play a key contributory role in their development. These include the FRESAs, for which the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have primary responsibility and the UK Online centres, for which the DfES is primarily responsible, and which feature as a key element of the department's contribution to the government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

Knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal

15 The remit and working arrangements of the LSC have undoubtedly been framed to enable it to address a wide range of social and economic issues that have learning and skills dimensions. *Learning to succeed* was written at the time when the government's Social Exclusion Unit was developing strategies for neighbourhood renewal and for young people not in education, employment or training. In both policy areas, the government acknowledged the value of effective policies and structures for learning and skills. Improving provision for disaffected young people and for adults living in deprived areas both appear as objectives in the LSC's Remit Letter. Paragraphs 23–25 of the Remit Letter explicitly address regeneration. The importance accorded to partnership working at both policy and operational level also reflects an attempt to address such 'cross-cutting' issues through effective planning and dialogue between learning providers and other related organisations.

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16 However, it should be noted that, while the post-16 learning and skills framework has been designed to contribute to regeneration policy, and in many areas, appears to be supporting neighbourhood renewal strategies, it might appear to pay little attention to knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal. There are few, if any, references in DfES or LSC policy guidance to knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal, only broad references to 'capacity-building' and 'developing stronger communities, better able to maintain the momentum of neighbourhood renewal'.

17 While these references might be interpreted as being about knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal by those who are aware of the need for such learning, many learning providers and stakeholders may well be unaware of the importance of developing and delivering this provision. The creation of an explicit strategy for learning and skills development for neighbourhood renewal is a relatively new step. While many learning providers and local LSCs are likely to be aware of, and support, regeneration-related activities, unless their attention is drawn to the need for *specific* knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal, this is unlikely to receive the attention and funding that it needs.

18 The lack of awareness of the need for specific knowledge and skills for neighbourhood renewal, and the lack of recognition of neighbourhood renewal skills as *a distinct skill set*, might well explain why little attention has yet been paid to it within some of the key policy initiatives designed to address local and regional skills needs and vocational learning, such as the Centres of Vocational Excellence programme.

19 Notwithstanding this point, four key changes to the policy framework enable the LSC to be more supportive of, and attuned to, the NRU's Learning and Development Strategy, than predecessor funding bodies:
- integrated planning, budgeting and funding arrangements
- social partnership strategies
- equality of opportunity
- responsiveness to local issues and needs.

Integrated planning, budgeting and funding arrangements

20 A key change is the expectation by Ministers that the LSC will operate planning-led funding arrangements. In contrast, the planning role of the predecessor bodies, the FEFC and the Training and Enterprise Councils, was, at best, ambivalent. The previous, rather weak, duty of the FEFC to secure 'adequate and sufficient' provision has been replaced by a much stronger strategic planning framework, underpinned by a comprehensive demand and needs assessment at local, regional and national level.

21 Through its funding system, the LSC has the capability to influence the curriculum offered by providers and the mix of provision available locally. The move to a planning-led funding approach aims to ensure that funding for learning provision 'follows the learner'; that is, that the allocation of funding reflects learner demand and the LSC's corporate priorities, determined through consultation with national, regional and local stakeholders. In theory, this should mean that, as with any other type of learning, the LSC should seek to fund regeneration-related knowledge and skills programmes where there is an identified demand for that provision, provided that it fits with the LSC's priorities and can be accommodated within its budget allocations.

22 The LSC's priorities for funding are likely to be driven strongly by government targets for post-16 learning and skills. The LSC's Grant Letter from the Secretary of State for 2002/03 notes that it is expected to make good progress across the full range of targets set out in the LSC's Corporate Plan.[6] These targets include ambitious and high-profile targets for improving basic skills which Ministers expect to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Perhaps even more important are the Public Service Agreement (PSA) Targets which are published as part of the Treasury's Spending Review. The 2002 targets include:

- improving the basic skills of 1.5m adults between 2001 and 2007, with a milestone of 750,000 by 2004
- reducing by at least 40% the number of adults who lack NVQ Level 2 or equivalent by 2010, with a milestone of 1m adults achieving a Level 2 qualification between 2003 and 2006.

23 These PSA targets are likely to be incorporated into the Secretary of State's guidance to the LSC for 2003/04.[7] While the targets will undoubtedly contribute broadly to regeneration, by improving low skill levels, none of the PSA targets for the DfES mentions regeneration generally or, more specifically, skills and knowledge to support those working in neighbourhood renewal. While the LSC has been designed as a national body with local arms to enable it to respond to local needs, it is still clearly a national body. Therefore, there might well be an issue about the extent to which 'top-down', centrally determined targets such as PSA and National Learning Targets could squeeze out bottom-up, locally determined priorities, which might include skills in support of the NRU's Learning and Development Strategy.

24 The LSC's strategic planning policies are explored in more detail in paragraphs 74–81.

Social partnership strategies

25 The LSC is expected to promote and support social partnership strategies. The importance of partnership is emphasised by the fact that the first section of the LSC's Remit Letter is devoted to the importance of building partnerships. Paragraph 8 of the letter states that:

> *...the success of the Council will depend upon strong partnerships and effective linkages with a wide range of organisations.*

26 Paragraph 10 makes an explicit reference to the local strategic partnerships (LSPs) as a key sub-regional forum:

> *The new local strategic partnerships will also have an important role to play in developing shared community strategies, particularly around addressing the needs of deprived areas.*

27 Learning partnerships are regarded as another key partner, '...particularly as a conduit for the views of learners and voluntary and community organisations'.

28 Learning partnerships were set up in 1999, prior to the creation of the LSC, to improve coherence and collaboration in the local planning and delivery of post-16 education and training.[8] In total, 101 partnerships were created: some coterminous with local LSC boundaries, others operating over a much more limited geographical area.

29 With the advent of the LSC and its stronger strategic planning role and powers to shape patterns of learning provision, and with the introduction of local strategic partnerships (established since April 2001), the role of learning partnerships became less clear-cut. Ministers consulted on the role of learning partnerships in 2002 and concluded that the partnerships added most value where they focused on a small number of issues of strategic importance to their local area, including regeneration. Two key roles were defined for learning partnerships: promoting collaboration and contributing to regeneration.

30 The desire for learning partnerships to play a role in regeneration strategies was emphasised in the Minister's announcement on the future role of learning partnerships.[9] Learning partnerships will, from April 2003, be funded by the LSC, enabling closer alignment between their work and that of the LSC's local arms. From April 2003, the LSC will also be given a key new duty to sustain partnerships in every local area, to promote provider collaboration in support of lifelong learning and to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration. To assist with this new role, the £10m learning partnership fund will transfer to the LSC and become part of the Local Intervention and Development (LID) Fund. This new duty could help support the NRU with improving neighbourhood renewal-related skills and knowledge.

31 Learning partnerships will need to consider and develop their relationships with LSPs. LSPs will support local authorities in developing their community strategies and will themselves develop local neighbourhood renewal strategies, incorporating 'local action on learning' plans that focus on supporting and improving the most deprived neighbourhoods. In some areas, learning partnerships have begun to operate as the 'learning arm' of the LSP.

32 A paper by a steering group set up to oversee the transition towards the learning partnerships is helpful in that it makes the (as yet unusual) distinction between skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal and learning that contributes to regeneration more generally:

> *...learning partnerships are expected to make a full contribution to the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal by improving the quality of the learning provider base, by encouraging the development of small and community and voluntary organisations and through the provision of neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge.*[10]

33 Respondents to the consultation on the future role of learning partnerships observed that many partnerships are developing an advisory role in relation to their local LSC. If this is indeed the case, then the strengthening of the regeneration role of the partnerships, combined with the new duty upon the LSC to sustain these partnerships, might help engender a sharper focus on neighbourhood renewal-related skills and knowledge in local LSC needs assessments.

Equality of opportunity

34 A further new and important duty upon the LSC is to promote equality of opportunity in all areas of activity. Equality of opportunity is to be built into all policies, programmes and actions to ensure that the learning and skills needs of the most disadvantaged individuals are met. As well as encouraging the mainstreaming of equality practices by learning providers, this duty could be beneficial in terms of 'bending' resources towards disadvantaged areas.

35 Aligning mainstream, large-scale public expenditure programmes with regeneration objectives has been recognised by the Social Exclusion Unit, among others, as being crucially important to achieving success. There are some signs that bending the mainstream is beginning to occur within the LSC. For 2001/02, the LSC's Local Initiatives Fund (LIF), a £90m fund allocated by the local LSCs to address barriers to participation among non-learners in their area, was allocated on the basis of the level of social and economic disadvantage, with proportionately higher-level allocations being directed to LSC areas with higher levels of deprivation and unemployment.[11] Although the proportion of the LSC's resources set aside for the LIF is relatively small (£90m compared with over £7 billion in total), it is still a positive development.

36 Additionally, FE Learner Support Funds have been 'bent' towards disadvantaged areas. For 2001/02, LSC Circular 01/08[12] states that 50% of the funds allocated to colleges for young people and for adults was determined on the basis of the colleges' level of funds for widening participation.

Responsiveness to local issues and needs

37 The LSC has 47 local 'arms', known as 'local LSCs', to help ensure that local needs and demand can be met and to ensure responsiveness and sensitivity to local circumstances. The local LSCs have a number of responsibilities that might help identify regeneration-related skills and knowledge as a funding priority:

- assembly of comprehensive data for their area on the characteristics of client groups, rates of participation, success in achieving skills and qualifications
- preparation of an assessment of local skills needs and, on the basis of this, an annual statement of needs and priorities
- development of local delivery plans in conjunction with local learning partnerships and other stakeholders
- focusing local provision more closely on customer needs.

38 There are explicit references in the Secretary of State's Remit Letter to the importance of local LSCs in 'capacity-building' and 'developing stronger communities, better able to maintain the momentum of neighbourhood renewal'. These references appear to support directly the work of the Learning and Development Strategy. Paragraph 24 of the Secretary of State's letter builds on this:

> *...I therefore expect local LSCs to take a holistic view of how their contribution fits within the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and to work with partners – particularly from the community and voluntary sectors – to target help where it is needed most.*

39 The LSC has been designed as a local structure to enable it to draw on local knowledge to identify and respond to priorities and needs for each area. The flexibility that local LSCs have to respond to the specific circumstances of their area (primarily through agreeing strategic planning priorities and through use of the LIF and subsequently the LID) may well increase as local social and economic strategies are put in place. These include regeneration strategies in neighbourhood renewal areas, and the creation of specific local targets, such as the floor targets referred to in paragraph 71.

Moreover, Treasury documents published as part of the 2002 Spending Review note that, from 2003, there will be a 'step-change' in the funding system for post-16 learning and skills. Local LSCs will be allocated 3-year budgets and 100% end-year flexibility. The Treasury notes that it expects to see the benefits of these arrangements flow to colleges, with funding priorities increasingly being determined on the basis of local strategic needs and priorities, rather than according to affordability. Budget devolution may well enhance the ability of local LSCs to respond to the specific needs of their areas, but local LSCs' activities are still likely to be strongly influenced by the PSAs which accompany these new flexibilities.

FRESAs

40 Another important development of potential relevance to the work of the NRU is the creation of FRESAs. The nine RDAs were asked to lead on the preparation of a FRESA for their region. The first FRESA for each region was due to be completed by October 2002.

41 FRESAs were intended to provide a forum for planning and delivery that would involve all of the main local and regional stakeholders. The FRESA documents will be based on a range of information on employment and other skills needs in the area and are designed to encourage the skills necessary for the regional economy of the area in question, including basic skills.

42 The local LSCs are regarded as having a major role in helping to achieve the RDAs' skills strategies. The FRESAs will inform the local LSCs' planning processes and priorities.

43 While the FRESAs offer a powerful means of identifying and influencing skills priorities and delivery, if neither the information on skills informing the FRESAs, nor those responsible for preparing the framework, recognise skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal as being a valid skill set or employment requirement, as may currently be the case, then FRESAs are unlikely to be as helpful as they might be in improving the availability and delivery of skills for neighbourhood renewal.

Overview of policy for FE colleges, including sixth form colleges

44 The post-16 learning and skills framework has been designed *not* to distinguish between the four constituent sectors: FE colleges, private training providers, ACL providers, and school sixth forms. However, as the learning and skills sector has developed, a debate has emerged among policy-makers about whether FE colleges should have a distinctive role and, if so, what it should be.

45 *Colleges for excellence and innovation* and *Success for all*, published by the DfEE in November 2000[13] and by the DfES in June 2002[14] respectively, propose a modernised role for FE colleges. In essence, they argue that colleges have simply reacted to funding opportunities rather than basing their decisions on a clear analysis of their distinctive missions and strengths.

46 They argue that there has been:
- little strategic planning to provide the type and quality of provision that local learners and employers want
- unhealthy levels of casualisation in the workforce
- insufficient emphasis on improving professional skills.

47 Although there are undoubtedly many colleges which do operate effectively, these analyses suggest that many may not have been well placed to respond to the government's learner-focused post-16 policies, including skills development for neighbourhood renewal.

Policies on college specialisation

48 Ministers are increasingly talking of the need for FE colleges to develop specialisms and increased focus in their mission. The desire for an increase in college specialisms (ie specialist activities within a college's broader programme) was first announced in *Colleges for excellence and innovation*, where it was expressed through the Centres of Vocational Excellence programme, also announced in that policy document. Policies on specialisation were developed further in *Success for all*. Paragraph 14 of *Success for all* states that:

> *...We want every college and provider to be clear about its own education mission and focus on its particular strengths. This is not about imposing arbitrary or unnecessary restrictions on what is offered where that is of good quality and meets local needs ... In the future, we want colleges and other providers to focus upon what they do best ... This will mean taking hard decisions about whether it is right to continue with everything that they do now ... and filling gaps where they occur.*

49 *Success for all* also proposes radical improvements in teaching and learning, including the professionalisation of FE teaching staff and the creation of 'teaching and learning frameworks' for major curriculum areas. It is proposed that this would include consideration of all aspects of teaching and learning including the delivery methods, the assessment methods, the syllabus content and teaching techniques.

50 The general impetus to 'raise the game' of FE colleges, by making them more focused on, and responsive to, the needs of local learners and communities and in a stronger position to meet these needs through better developed staff, is likely to be a positive development in the context of the NRU work, especially combined with the refocusing of learning partnerships on regeneration.

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ACL programmes

51 The Learning and Skills Act (2000) contains a new power for the LSC to fund non-accredited provision (previously known as 'non-schedule 2 provision') both in FE colleges and in ACL providers.[15] This type of provision has been regarded as having a primary role to play in encouraging non-learners into learning. It could be useful in enabling colleges to deliver non-accredited programmes or informal learning to regeneration practitioners or residents requiring short, focused development programmes to enable them to participate effectively in regeneration-related activities. However, in the LSC's Grant Letter, the Secretary of State urges the Council to use this new power to take forward regeneration through:

> *a revitalised adult and community learning sector working with local authorities, learning partnerships and the voluntary and community sectors, and focusing on delivering learning opportunities to those in disadvantaged communities.*

52 For local education authorities (LEAs), there are some important legal changes brought about by the Learning and Skills Act. Their duties in the field of adult education are amended by the Act. These amendments came into force in April 2001.

53 Clause 22(3) of the Learning and Skills Act (2000) states that, in preparing its plan for each financial year, the local LSC plan must include a statement of the education and training that it wishes a relevant LEA to provide for persons who have attained the age of 19.

54 A new duty upon LEAs is set out in clause 23 of the Act, to the effect that, if an LEA does not secure the provision of education and training in accordance with the provision included in a plan under clause 22(3), the Secretary of State may direct the authority to do so. The authority must act in accordance with the direction, but only if the LSC provides it with any financial resources which the authority reasonably requires. This reserve power for the Secretary of State is likely to be used only in exceptional circumstances and provision is likely to be secured through collaborative planning and funding.

55 During 2001/02 and 2002/03, ACL delivered by, or on behalf of, LEAs has been funded according to Adult Learning Plans. The Adult Learning Plan has been the key means through which LEAs secured funding from the LSC. Local LSCs have been responsible for the approval of local learning plans for their area, which means that the LSC has been able to influence what is delivered in each local area. The LSC's guidance on ACL requested that, in preparing their plans, local authorities should pay due heed to the national priorities for neighbourhood renewal, including the need to support strategies for neighbourhood renewal.

56 Recent funding proposals for ACL, which aim to bring the great majority of ACL funding within the LSC's main national funding method and planning systems, indicate that some ACL providers which might previously have received their funding via FE colleges or local authorities could, in future, be funded directly by the LSC, subject to satisfactory administrative and quality assurance arrangements. This does *not* appear to imply that the LSC's policy on collaborative provision has changed (whereby FE colleges arrange for some of their activity to be delivered through another provider and where the FE college receives funding on behalf of that provider for onward transmission). Rather, it appears to be designed to give those providers which wish to, and are able to, the opportunity to receive funding directly from the LSC. These proposals will help the LSC to be clearer about what it is purchasing and from whom, and may raise the status of voluntary and community sector providers within their post-16 area.

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57 *Success for all* states that, through its strategic planning processes and a new process of 'area review', the local LSCs will work with providers to produce a long-term vision of the development of a 'local network'.[16] The implications of this last statement are not made explicit in *Success for all*, but, in the light of the desire for colleges to develop specialisms, one possible outcome might be that community and voluntary sector providers work with colleges to deliver different types and levels of learning and skills to different groups of individuals involved in neighbourhood renewal, according to the providers' strengths. For example, colleges and community and voluntary sector providers might decide variously to specialise in delivering non-accredited or informal short programmes to residents wishing to participate in regeneration activities, or more advanced programmes of professional development to practitioners and public sector professionals.

Neighbourhood learning centres/UK Online centres

58 The government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal commits the government to establishing neighbourhood learning centres in every deprived community.

59 UK Online centres offer neighbourhood-based learning to equip users with computer-related skills. They are focused on the most disadvantaged communities. At the time of writing there are over 1500 UK Online centres up and running, including many in colleges and community centres, and the government expects 6000 centres to have been established by the end of 2002.[17]

60 UK Online centres or other neighbourhood learning centres might offer some scope for training those involved in neighbourhood renewal in ICT-related skills, but are unlikely to offer a broader range of learning for neighbourhood renewal. Given the potential range and complexity of curricula required by those working in neighbourhood renewal, it is more likely that colleges and established community providers will be better equipped to offer learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal.

Core activities of colleges

61 Under the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), FE colleges became incorporated bodies, managed by Boards of Governors, and were removed from local authority control. As incorporated bodies, colleges have considerable freedom to determine what and how they deliver and to whom. While there are conditions of funding in respect of the monies that colleges receive from the LSC (set out in the financial memorandum and the annual funding agreement) which could be used to direct colleges to use funding in particular ways, the LSC would need to be clear that this was a necessary and appropriate way to secure its objectives.

62 Some colleges may not regard regeneration-related activity as core, or even important to their work, particularly if it relates to working with groups of people who are regarded as disadvantaged and the college does not see this as a central part of its mission. This observation is supported by work by the LSDA on good practice in widening participation (among adults who do not participate in learning).[18] It concluded that the extent to which colleges regard widening participation as 'core business' will depend upon a number of inter-related factors, including:

- the volume of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds within the college's catchment area
- the length of time that a college has been active in widening participation
- the presence of other local adult learning providers already heavily engaged in widening participation
- the extent of local competition for learners.

63 On the basis of case study fieldwork, the report defined three broad types of college:

- the college with a strong 'community' mission, aiming to serve the whole of the local population and actively engaged in social and economic regeneration. Adults make up a large proportion of the student body
- the college where widening participation for adults is treated as important work, but not as the core business of the college
- the college where widening participation is marginal to the main mission and business focus.

64 Even colleges which regard regeneration-related activities as part of their core business might not choose to deliver skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal. Again, this might be partly because colleges are unaware of the need for, or importance of, these skills as a specific skill set, and focus instead on improving the general level of attainment and employability skills in their communities. It will be important that the NRU finds ways of encouraging colleges working in, and committed to, neighbourhood renewal areas to recognise the importance of these skills and develop provision accordingly. Part B suggests policy 'levers' that might be used.

Part B

Specific policy levers within the learning and skills policy framework

65 This section examines the way in which a range of policy 'levers', available to the LSC and other key bodies, can influence the way in which learning providers, including colleges, deliver post-16 learning and skills provision. The key levers are:

- learning and skills targets
- strategic planning of learning and skills provision
- funding policies
- quality improvement – staff development
- strategic organisation and development policies.

66 These levers can be used in tandem or alone to bring about a change in behaviour.

67 It is important to note that the learning and skills sector is relatively new; therefore, many of the policies and objectives outlined in the LSC's Remit Letter are (at the time of writing) at the stage of being expressions of policy intention, rather than being fully worked-out and implemented policy. This is particularly true of the proposals contained in *Success for all*, a consultative document.

Learning and skills targets

68 The LSC has a number of headline targets which underpin its work. These are broad-ranging targets, covering participation and attainment by young people and adults, workforce development and quality improvement. While none of these targets specifically relates to regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, the terms of the Council's Remit Letter and Grant Letter for 2002/03 make it clear that regeneration should be a key focus of the participation and attainment targets for adults. However, the scope and breadth of the LSC's targets mean that regeneration activities are but one of a large number of issues with which the Council is concerned.

69 As mentioned in Part A of this analysis, the influential PSA Targets, published as part of the Treasury's Spending Review, are expected to form some of the LSC's key targets for 2003/04 and beyond. While likely to contribute to overall improvements in skill levels at basic skills level and Level 2, and thus to support the general thrust of regeneration policies, the targets are not specifically related to regeneration or neighbourhood renewal. Even though the local LSCs have been designed with flexibility to respond to skills and learning issues in their local area, there is a danger that 'top-down', centrally determined targets such as PSA and National Learning Targets could squeeze out bottom-up, locally determined priorities, which might include skills in support of the NRU's Learning and Development Strategy.

70 This may be compounded by the fact that, as a new and potentially very powerful public body, signs of LSC's success and progress will be eagerly anticipated by the government. Early progress is likely to be measured in quantitative terms through levels of improved participation and attainment. Therefore, it might be expected that the LSC will focus at first on 'big and easy wins' before turning attention to more difficult tasks of developing effective, multi-dimensional strategies for community capacity-building and regeneration.

71 A recent innovation by the government has been the introduction of so-called 'floor targets' or minimum standards which are designed to improve public services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.[19] The floor targets will run until 2004, but are likely to be in place over a longer period of time. *Success for all* proposes that the LSC should establish floor targets for success rates on a provider basis in relation to success in key areas of activity:

> *These should define clearly the minimum levels of performance expected. These success rates will need to support the LSC's local and national targets and be realistic, but challenging, and take account of current local performance and national benchmarking data.*

72 It goes on to say that:

We will ensure that targets do not adversely distort behaviour, or sacrifice quality or access to learning. This is vital, for example, in achieving widening participation and ensuring that high quality provision is available for the hardest to help learners.

73 There is no detail yet on what these provider-focused floor targets will be, but, if it is possible to include a regeneration dimension within the suite of floor targets, then it might be more useful to create 'area-based' floor targets for providers in neighbourhood renewal areas, than regeneration-related targets focused on individual providers. The benefit of an area-based approach would be that it would not hold responsible any particular provider for the delivery of regeneration-related provision; rather, the responsibility would be upon providers in an area to agree which providers would be best placed to contribute to regeneration. This would fit with the increasing emphasis upon planning and collaboration to meet needs and demand for learning and with the desire for increased specialism by providers. Area-based floor targets might be tied into area reviews and area plans for the development of learning provision and provider capacity (see paragraph 78 below).[20]

> ***Policy tool:*** *post-16 floor targets. We suggest that the NRU investigates the scope for creating area-based, learning provider-focused regeneration-related floor targets for the 88 most deprived areas.*

Strategic planning of learning and skills provision

74 As noted earlier, a key aim of the Learning and Skills Act has been to bring about a more strongly planning-led approach to funding learning provision.

75 Circular 01/01[21] set out the principles of the LSC's approach to planning and these arrangements were later built on in Circular 01/19 *Arrangements for planning and budgeting for further education in 2002/03.*[22] The new arrangements for planning and budgeting were described as being based upon:

discussions between institutions and their local Learning and Skills Councils. The dialogue with the Councils will establish institutions' baseline plans for 2002/03 and consider proposals for growth activity. These discussions will take place between December and March each year.

Growth in learning provision

76 The arrangements for allocating growth in volumes of learning delivered are described as follows:

following the receipt of the Secretary of State's guidance, and depending on the funds available, local Councils will allocate growth in accordance with the Council and government priorities. Local Councils will decide how to use their allocations to meet local priorities and demands in their area, within a national framework.

77 In theory, the move to a planning-led approach to investing in provision which meets identified learner, community and employer needs is potentially extremely useful. This should help to alleviate the impression that colleges respond only to funding rather than considering in the round the contribution that they can make to delivery, in the context of local needs and other suppliers. However, as discussed earlier, much depends on the nature of the discussion at local level, which priorities are brought to bear, which targets are regarded as most important, and how discussions are moderated. While 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' targets should, in theory, inform and complement each other, there is a danger of tensions between what is regarded nationally as being the priority and what is regarded locally as being important. The emergence of an 'advisory' role for local learning partnerships in relation to the LSCs, the sharpening of the regeneration focus of the learning partnerships, and the expectation that LSCs should regard learning partnerships as key regional partners in their consultations on needs and demand, are potentially helpful counterweights in helping to balance possible tensions.

Strategic Area Reviews

78 Consultation proposals described in *Success for all* propose that all LSCs should carry out an area review of provision in their area to help decide what should be funded and how local learning networks should develop.[23] Area reviews will identify where provision needs improvement or where new provision needs to be introduced and LSC will work with local providers to create a long-term view of how patterns of provision should develop. Priorities for area review described in the consultation document include the availability of 14–19 opportunities, basic skills and progression to higher education, but not specifically regeneration-related knowledge and skills development in neighbourhood renewal areas. However, area reviews have already been conducted in a number of areas of England and have examined the extent to which ACL is meeting the full range of needs.

79 Area review is potentially a very powerful tool and could be helpful to the NRU in identifying and considering the best ways to deliver learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal. In the context of the NRU's work, it might be particularly powerful when allied to area-based floor targets and other local performance indicators that focus on regeneration. However, again, much depends upon those conducting the review recognising that skills for neighbourhood renewal constitute an emerging and valid skills set, to be treated as key local employment skills that should be planned and funded accordingly.

80 The LSC has been asked to consult on proposals for area review in the latter part of 2002 (this had not occurred at the time of writing).[24] The NRU might wish to consider how best to draw the attention of local LSCs and other key stakeholders to the importance of skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal and to encourage the LSCs working in neighbourhood renewal areas to consider such skills when they conduct area reviews.

Increasing provider capacity

81 The introduction within the new post-16 framework of a power by the LSC to fund institutions not previously funded by the FEFC might be helpful in addressing gaps in regeneration-related provision resulting from either lack of provider capacity or the unwillingness of providers to operate in regeneration-related fields. The LSC has prepared a guidance manual, which describes the framework for assessing and approving new providers.[25] On the basis of regular needs assessments, local LSCs will decide whether there is a need to seek applications from providers to deliver provision that cannot be met by existing institutions. Once a potential new provider has been assessed and judged to be a suitable supplier of post-16 provision, it may be able to receive LSC funds. Such providers might be private providers, or community or voluntary sector providers.

> ***Policy tool:*** *Local LSCs' need and demand assessments as part of annual strategic planning processes. We suggest that the NRU should seek appropriate ways of contributing to LSC planning processes in the 88 neighbourhood renewal areas. The NRU might encourage LSCs to consider regeneration-related skills and knowledge as well as more general learning and skills provision to help those living in disadvantaged areas.*

> ***Policy tool:*** *Area reviews. The NRU might wish to consider encouraging the LSC to include capacity to deliver regeneration-related skills and knowledge as a key performance criterion for area reviews occurring within the 88 neighbourhood renewal areas.*

Funding policies

82 There are several aspects of funding policy which might have a positive effect on colleges' response to neighbourhood renewal, or which might be used to fund regeneration-related activities:

- the disadvantage factor in the national funding formula
- Learner Support Funds
- the non-formula-based LID Fund.

National funding formula: the disadvantage uplift

83 The majority of the LSC's funding for learning provision is allocated through a national funding formula. The formula includes a 'disadvantage uplift' (previously known as the 'widening participation' uplift). The uplift is triggered by the characteristics of a learner. Learners eligible for this uplift include those living in deprived areas as defined by their postcode or by the local LSC using an average factor based on the postcodes in the local area.

84 The disadvantage factor is designed as 'an enhancement to support the national priority of engaging disadvantaged learners and to recognise the additional costs for providers of doing so'. There has been considerable debate about the effectiveness of the widening participation uplift as an incentive to encourage colleges to recruit learners from disadvantaged areas and about the extent to which it recognises the additional costs of doing so. There has also been much debate about the most appropriate and accurate way of defining and applying the disadvantage uplift. The uplift is currently a 'proxy' for disadvantage based on an indirect, average measure of the socio-economic profile of a local area, as opposed to a more direct measure of the socio-economic characteristics of any individual.

85 The current proxy measure might well be advantageous to the NRU in encouraging colleges to deliver skills and knowledge for regeneration to local regeneration practitioners as well as more general learning and skills for residents in deprived neighbourhoods. Both these groups will qualify for the uplift, irrespective of their circumstances, as long as they live in a deprived area.

86 The LSC has been conducting a review of the disadvantage uplift. The review is aimed at determining how the uplift might best be applied and the appropriate level for the uplift. The LSC's National Rates Advisory Group is proposing to the Council that the costs of engaging learners, that is, recruiting them, should be funded separately from the costs of progression, that is, participation by learners in learning programmes. The 'engagement' costs of widening participation might be allocated through the local LSCs to enable better targeting of funds in ways that will help to widen participation. The outcomes of the review were expected to be announced as part of an LSC consultation exercise in November 2002.

> ***Policy tool:*** *Disadvantage uplift. We recommend that the NRU reviews the LSC's recommendations for the future of the disadvantage uplift to assess whether the Council's decisions are more or less likely to assist its work.*

Learner financial support: FE college access funds

87 One of the key concerns raised by the NRU in its Learning and Development Strategy is how best to support those with limited financial means to participate in regeneration-related skills and knowledge development. Learner financial support in the form of college access funds is allocated to FE colleges by the LSC for onward transmission to learners in need. While it is up to colleges to set their own policies for the allocation of these funds, the LSC requires that 'colleges must have policies which are made widely available and which they are able to defend'.

88 Under the new post-16 framework, FE colleges are now able to provide discretionary support to learners following non-accredited programmes who have the potential to return to mainstream learning (ie programmes which do not lead to assessment and certification, formerly known as non-schedule 2 programmes – see also paragraph 51 of this review). FE institutions have been asked in particular to consider whether their learner financial support arrangements are sufficiently flexible to support learners on very short, non-accredited programmes introduced in 2001/02. The broadening of learner support arrangements to support learners on non-accredited programmes could be helpful to individuals participating in regeneration-related skills and knowledge development, which might well be short, non-certificated programmes.

Non-formula funding: Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID)

89 Each local LSC manages a LID (formerly the LIF), which the LSC Remit Letter advises is to be used 'flexibly and in new ways to address the remaining barriers to learning'.[26] It can be used to support the LSC's role in local economic development, including regeneration and inward investment. In guiding local LSCs on their use of this funding, the Remit Letter is particularly supportive of knowledge and skills development for neighbourhood renewal:

> *there is value in training courses for community leaders. Local LSCs must take account of activity under the Community Champions Fund, and the development of resident consultancy initiatives, which support skills development and help for residents' own communities and others through the spread of good practice.*

90 An LSC press release notes that the fund has been used by local LSCs to improve basic skills and tackle social and employment problems in their catchment areas.[27] Examples include projects to improve the job prospects of 'hard to help' 16–18 year olds; projects to help the long-term unemployed back into education; and projects to improve the quality of staff training for care homes that suffer high staff turnover.

91 The LID has considerable potential to contribute to regeneration-related skills and knowledge development both through explicit support contained in government policy guidance and in terms of the way in which the fund has been 'bent' towards deprived areas. For 2001/02, the LIF was allocated on the basis of:

- the number of long-term unemployed people in each local LSC area
- the number of school leavers with fewer than 5 GCSEs
- the number of people in employment in that area.

92 It does not appear that regeneration-related knowledge and skills development has yet received significant attention through the fund. This might well reflect simply the choice of examples contained in the press release, but it is probably more likely to reflect the fact that such skills and knowledge are not yet recognised as being a distinct skill set, combined with the focus of the LSC's corporate targets, in which improvement of basic skills and participation of disadvantaged learners have a high profile, as well as pressure on the LSC to achieve a volume step-change in participation and attainment levels. Moreover, the LSC has only been established for one year. There is a limit to what it can achieve in such a short timescale.

> ***Policy tool:*** *Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID). We recommend that the NRU considers appropriate means of influencing the use of LID funds, to ensure that regeneration skills and knowledge development is identified as a priority and funded in the 88 neighbourhood renewal areas.*

Quality improvement – staff development

93 The government is implementing a range of quality improvement policies which should support and equip staff to become more responsive to the needs of their local areas. A key area of development has been the requirement of teaching qualifications for FE teaching staff and college principals.

94 The government has recently introduced a requirement for all *new* teachers in FE to be professionally qualified. The Education Act (2002) contains new provisions which would allow the requirement for new teachers in further education to be qualified, to be extended to all teachers in due course.

Occupational standards for FE staff

95 Since September 2001:

- all new unqualified teachers who are employed to teach an FE course leading to a nationally recognised qualification at an FE college must hold, or be working towards and achieve in a specified time, a recognised teaching qualification appropriate to their role. DfES requires all courses leading to an FE teaching qualification to be based on FENTO standards and endorsed by FENTO as doing so. The endorsement guarantees that the qualification is based on FENTO standards and that it complies with appropriate quality assurance criteria.
- for existing FE teachers, colleges can access matched funding from the LSC Standards Fund for flexible, tailored professional development activity included as part of a college staff development plan agreed with the LSC, including qualification costs for unqualified staff.[28]
- in relation to basic skills, all FE teaching qualifications are being developed to cover the teaching of basic skills to a minimum level as covered in the general FENTO standards.

96 From 2002, a National Professional Qualification for College Principals will be introduced, which new principals will be required to hold before taking up post, after a date yet to be specified.

97 A new national Leadership College is to be opened in 2003.[29] It will be a Centre of Excellence for all managers and leaders, providing a comprehensive induction programme for all new FE college principals. *Success for all* proposed that the LSC should work with the DfES to establish the Leadership College and the professional teaching qualifications for FE staff and work-based learning trainers, to encourage the take-up of qualifications and disseminate good practice in teaching and training, management and leadership.

98 The LSC Standards Fund will be used to resource work undertaken by colleges, through their action plans, to support this framework. The Standards Fund will be allocated by local LSCs to:

- improve teaching and learning, including equipping teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills to work with diverse groups of learners
- training unqualified teachers and trainers and improving skills in information and learning technologies for teachers and trainers
- improving skills in leadership and management.

99 There will also be a national priorities fund which will fund, among other priorities:

- programmes of training and development for black managers and staff
- programmes of dissemination of good practice to address specific regional, sectoral and national issues.

100 The general improvement brought about by the development and introduction of teaching qualifications is likely to increase colleges' responsiveness to local stakeholders. The development in teaching qualifications has not yet focused on specific areas of policy concern, other than basic skills. However, FENTO has begun to develop standards for teaching in relation to social inclusion, and there may therefore be scope for the development of specific standards in relation to regeneration, if this subject is brought to the attention of the proposed Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council (the replacement body for FENTO).[30]

Policy tool: *Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council and Leadership College. We recommend that the NRU should work with the DfES to ensure that the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council and the new national Leadership College are given a clear brief to develop staff, management and leadership skills for working in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.*

Occupational standards for community-based learning and development

101 PAULO, the national training organisation which represents the community-based learning and development sector, has developed a range of occupational standards and qualifications for youth work and community development work. These occupational standards will cover 80% of staff employed in the community-based learning and development sector across the UK. The development of occupational standards is also occurring in relation to staff working with Connexions Services (for young people aged 13–19), working in the delivery of Basic Skills, Parenting Education and Family Learning. PAULO is involved in developing standards with Ufi and with the development of occupational standards for FE management and learner support. A further aspect of PAULO's work is the development of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in youth work and community development work. MAs could make a significant contribution to the skill levels of those working in communities with high deprivation and unemployment.

102 The development of occupational standards in these areas is likely to encourage greater recognition and awareness of the importance of skills for working in neighbourhood renewal.

> ***Policy tool:*** *Occupational standards for community-based learning and development. We recommend that the NRU investigates the possibility of using PAULO's work on occupational standards for community-based learning and development as the basis for developing occupational standards for workers involved in neighbourhood renewal.*

Strategic organisation and development policies

103 The LSC has begun to exercise its responsibilities in relation to the strategic development of the sector in two ways:

- through developing proposals for provider reorganisation, where this would help further the LSC's objectives (these policies are at an early stage of development)
- through working with learning providers to help them develop their mission and focus, primarily through the implementation of the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) policy (see below) and local area reviews.

104 Ministers are keen that colleges should develop specialisms by identifying what they do best and then 'making that field central to its mission'. In initial policy statements, they anticipated three different ways in which colleges might develop specialisms:

- in a set of occupations that are critical to an important group of industries locally
- in a generic skill area where the college has a good track record
- in an industrial field or generic area where the college could act as a national centre for specialist teaching.

105 In summary, CoVEs are designed to:

- develop new, and enhance existing, excellent vocational provision that is focused on meeting the skills needs of employers, locally, regionally, nationally or sectorally
- focus on developing the skills and careers of those already in work, enhancing the employability of new entrants to the labour market and the employment prospects of those seeking work
- focus primarily on delivering skills at Level 3.

106 Resources for learning are expected to include well-qualified, specialist staff, an adequately funded staff development programme and staff who maintain a close working relationship with the industry concerned.[31]

107 Since the policy's inception, CoVEs have been established across a wide range of subject and sector specialisms. The CoVE programme was initially established for FE colleges, but eligibility has recently been extended to other types of providers, most likely private training providers.[32] Local LSCs play a key role in selecting and developing CoVEs in their area. At the time of writing, however, there are no regeneration-focused CoVEs and priority areas for this round (set by the National Policy and Selection Panel) do not include neighbourhood renewal and regeneration.

108 This is perhaps not surprising given that the CoVE programme has been running for a relatively short period of time and there are many competing skill areas to be considered for development. Again, it may also reflect the lack of awareness of skills for neighbourhood renewal as being an emerging and valid set of skills for employment.

109 The CoVE programme could support neighbourhood renewal through the establishment of a centre to deliver professional development programmes for regeneration practitioners and public sector professionals working in regeneration areas. These programmes are likely to be at Level 3 or beyond. The CoVE might be particularly effective if integrated with the workforce development and professionalisation initiatives described earlier in this section, in particular the development of a brief for both the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council and the national Leadership College to deliver teaching, management and leadership skills for working in neighbourhood renewal.

110 The CoVEs policy does have the potential to support neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge development, but the emergence of a 'regeneration CoVE' depends both on an appropriate college, provider or network of providers putting forward a proposal and that proposal being approved, in the context of the finite sum of funding available to support CoVE development.

> ***Policy tool:*** *The CoVE development programme. The NRU might wish to consider encouraging the National Policy and Selection Panel to include skills and knowledge for regeneration as one of its priorities for the next round of CoVE selection. The NRU might also consider working with selected local learning partnerships to encourage the emergence of a proposal for a regeneration-related skills and knowledge CoVE.*

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACL	adult and community learning
CoVE	Centre of Vocational Excellence
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	further education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
FRESA	Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
LEA	local education authority
LID	Local Intervention and Development Fund
LIF	Local Initiatives Fund (replaced by LID)
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSP	local strategic partnership
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RDA	Regional Development Agency

Notes

1 The Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID) brings together the former Local Initiatives Fund (LIF), Training and Enterprise Council legacy funding and residual standards funds.

2 *A new commitment to neighbourhood renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*, Social Exclusion Unit, 2000.

3 *The learning curve: developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal*, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, August 2002.

4 *Learning to succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning*, Cm 4392, DfEE, June 1999.

5 The Learning and Skills Council Remit Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, DFEE, November 2000.

6 Grant Letter 2002/03 from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to the Chairman of the LSC, 10 December 2001.

7 The Secretary of State's Grant Letter 2003/04 to the LSC includes:

- improving the literacy and numeracy skills of 1.5m adults and young people by 2007, with a milestone of 470,000 achievements by July 2003 and the target of 750,000 by 2004
- reducing by at least 40% the number of adults without a Level 2 qualification by 2010, with 1m adults currently in the workforce achieving Level 2 standard between 2003 and 2006.

8 *Report on the review of learning partnerships*, DfES, May 2002.

9 Learning partnerships: funding and support arrangements from April 2003, letter from Minister for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education to the Chairs of learning partnerships, DfES, 2002.

10 *Learning partnerships Transition Steering Group, Paper 4*, DfES, July 2002.

11 Replaced by the Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID). See note 1.

12 LSC Circular 01/08, *FE Learner Support*, Learning and Skills Council, 2001.

13 *Colleges for excellence and innovation: statement by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on the future of further education in England*, DfEE, November 2000.

14 *Success for all: reforming further education and training, discussion document, DfES*, June 2002.

15 The FEFC allocated 'non-schedule 2' funding for the purpose of reaching and engaging 'non-traditional' learners. Following the introduction of the Learning and Skills Council, replacing the FEFC, the distinction between schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 was abolished.

16 'Area reviews' were subsequently termed 'Strategic Area Reviews'. See Learning and Skills Council (2003). *Arrangements and guidance for Strategic Area Reviews*. Circular 03/06, April 2003.

17 The target of 6000 centres by the end of 2002 was met. See www.dfes.gov.uk/ukonlinecentres.

18 *Widening adult participation: ways to extend good practice*. A research report for the Learning and Skills Council, LSDA, March 2002 (published on the LSDA website, www.LSDA.org.uk, June 2003).

19 *The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Factsheet no. 2*, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, April 2002.

20 See note 16.

21 LSC Circular 01/01, *Planning: strategic plans, including financial forecasts and accommodation data*. Learning and Skills Council, 2001.

22 LSC Circular 01/19, *Arrangements for planning and budgeting for further education in 2002/03*, Learning and Skills Council, 2002.

23 See note 16.

24 See note 16.

25 *Initial assessment of new provision*, Learning and Skills Council, 2001.

26 See note 1.

27 'LIF Lifts Lives', LSC press release, 27 August 2002.

28 From 2002/03, the LSC Standards Fund was streamlined from 17 categories to 3: a local standards fund (allocated by each local LSC); an investment fund (held centrally for allocation by local LSCs); and a national priorities fund (to address national LSC and government priorities).

29 The Leadership College for the learning and skills sector (post-16 education and training outside the universities) will be launched in autumn 2003. The four organisations contracted to run it as a consortium are the Learning and Skills Development Agency, the Open University, Lancaster University Business School and Ashridge.

30 See: Learning and Skills Development Agency (2003). *LSDA response to consultation: proposal to form a Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council*; Association of Learning Providers (ALP), Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) and Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA) (2003). *Proposal to form a Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council*. Consultation.

31 LSC Circular 01/14, *Centres of Vocational Excellence*, Learning and Skills Council, 2001.

32 LSC Circular 02/08, *Centres of Vocational Excellence: CoVE Extension Programme*, Learning and Skills Council, 2002.

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